DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 327 900 CS 507 379

AUTHOR Hawken, Leila; And Others
TITLE The Relationships among Communicative Competence, Roommate Rapport, Loneliness and Persistence in College.
PUB DATE Nov 90
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (76th, Chicago, IL, November 1-4, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Persistence; *College Environment; College Freshmen; Communication Research; Communication Skills; Educational Research; Higher Education; *Interpersonal Communication; Interpersonal Competence; *Loneliness; Speech Communication
IDENTIFIERS Communication Context; *Compatibility (Social); *Roommates

ABSTRACT

A study investigated the influence of interpersonal variables, such as communicative competence, loneliness, and roommate rapport, upon persistence in college. The study includes self-reports as well as reports of roommates' behaviors. Subjects were 200 freshman students (out of a total of 350) who participated in several sections of a freshman-level orientation seminar at a small, private university in the Northeast. Results indicated significant multiple relationships between roommate rapport and self-reports, and reports of roommates' communicative competence. Significant multiple correlations were also found between loneliness and self-reports and reports of roommates' communicative competence. Significant relationships were observed for loneliness and roommate rapport and university satisfaction. Those students who persisted as opposed to those who left the institution differed on levels of social confirmation and loneliness. (Author/MG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED327900

THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE, ROOMMATE RAPPORT, LONELINESS AND PERSISTENCE IN COLLEGE

by

Leila Hawken
Assistant Director of Admissions
Hartt School of Music
University of Hartford
West Hartford, CT 06117
(203) 243-4465

Lynne Kelly
Associate Professor of Communication
University of Hartford

and

Robert L. Duran
Associate Professor of Communication
University of Hartford

Submitted to
Instructional Development Division
Speech Communication Association
February 1990

CS507379

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Leila Hawken
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE, ROOMMATE RAPPORT, LONELINESS AND PERSISTENCE IN COLLEGE

Abstract

For the past few years and approximately the next five years the number of eighteen-year-olds is and will continue to decline. The declining number of potential college freshmen has resulted in increased attention to factors which may contribute to college attrition. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of interpersonal variables, such as communicative competence, loneliness, and roommate rapport, upon persistence in college. This study included self-reports as well as reports of roommates' behaviors. Results revealed significant multiple relationships between roommate rapport and self-reports, and reports of roommates' communicative competence. Also, significant multiple correlations were found between loneliness and self-reports and reports of roommates' communicative competence. Additionally, significant relationships were observed for loneliness and roommate rapport and university satisfaction. Finally, those students who persisted as opposed to those who left the institution differed on levels of social confirmation and loneliness. These results are discussed in light of previous research and their practical implications.

THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE, ROOMMATE RAPPORT, LONELINESS AND PERSISTENCE IN COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

Unstable enrollment patterns and predictions of a downward trend in traditional student populations are of concern to most college administrators. Administrators whose responsibilities include enrollment management are interested in controlling attrition. It is likely that a large number of factors are associated with a student's decision to remain at or leave a particular college. The campus' physical environment, academic programs, and tuition are examples of some of the variables that may be associated with attrition. The focus of this study, however, is on interpersonal variables that should be related to persistence in college, such as communicative competence, loneliness, and roommate rapport.

Quoting 1982 data, McConnell and Kaufman (1984) report that nationally 2.8 million high school seniors graduated in 1981. In 1994, when the lowest expected level of the downward trend will have been reached, 2.3 million seniors will graduate from secondary schools in the United States, a reduction of 18 percent. In some regions, the reduction will be more severe, particularly in the northeast where 35 percent is the expected drop. Whether or not the figures prove to be accurate, it seems prudent to anticipate that the available population of traditional freshmen in the 18-year-old bracket will be diminished in 1994, and that college administrators must develop appropriate strategies for dealing with this decline.

Because of this uncertainty about the availability of new students, attrition and student retention must be monitored carefully. Reducing the drop-out rate is accorded primary importance in all types of institutions (Kemerer, Baldridge, & Green, 1982). Research that identifies variables associated with attrition and retention is important for this very practical reason.

Lenning, Sauer, and Beal (1980) distinguish between "student persistence" and "student retention", favoring the former term because of its student-focused approach to attrition, and rejecting the latter as an institution-focused approach. Recognizing the importance of controlling attrition, Lenning, et al., (1980) discuss the concept of the student-institution fit as a factor in student persistence. They summarize research which concludes that what separates "persisters" from "withdrawers" is not any specific student or institutional factor, but rather how various factors interact and fit together.

Interpersonal factors undoubtedly play a major role in a freshman student's acclimatization and hence persistence. Students' abilities to communicate with roommates, peers, faculty and others should have an impact on their success in establishing satisfying relationships. Without a sufficient social network, students may experience loneliness and may try to alleviate that loneliness by leaving college. This study will examine the relationships among communication competence, roommate rapport, and loneliness and their possible role in student persistence.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Some researchers have investigated the importance of the residential environment on student persistence (Upcraft, 1985). And in recent years, researchers have delved into specifics of the roommate relationship as a primary factor in satisfaction with the residential environment and hence, the college in general (Carey, Hamilton, & Shanklin, 1986; Duran & Zakahi, 1988; Jones, McCaa, & Martecchini, 1980; Waldo, 1984). In this section we will examine literature that focuses on relationships among student persistence, roommate relationships, communication competence and loneliness.

Some research has focused on the influence of attitude, personality, and behavioral differences of roommates on the quality of their relationship. Nudd (1965) found that failure of a roommate relationship can hinge on differences in behaviors, such as study habits, social habits, personal habits, etc., often hinging on only one small difference. Perhaps strong interpersonal communication skills could lessen the risk of roommate relationship failure. That is, students able to communicate responsibly about their differences and similarities in behavior or belief may be more likely to succeed as roommates.

Berg (1984) assessed pairs of roommates in the fall and spring semesters on variables such as liking and satisfaction, self-disclosure, rewards obtained, equity, similarity, and intention to remain roommates. Discriminant analyses indicated that the decision to abandon or continue a roommate relationship was made very early in that relationship. Liking decreased over time for roommates who had decided not to remain together, but was relatively unchanged for those pairs who intended to continue as roommates. Results also showed that roommates who did not intend to stay together were less satisfied, not only in the spring semester, but as early as two weeks after beginning to room together. Moreover, roommates not planning on remaining together reported that their roommates helped them less in the spring than in the fall and saw themselves as more dissimilar to their roommates than those who intended to continue as roommates (Berg, 1984).

Waldo (1984) studied the associations among students' personal adjustment, their communication with roommates, and their perceptions of the residence hall experience. Based on questionnaire data obtained from 138 students representing all four years, Waldo (1984) found: (1) depression and problems with alcohol were negatively related to quality of the roommate relationship and level of communication with one's roommate; (2) speaking skills in a

nonconflict situation and listening skills in a conflict situation were significantly related to the quality of the roommate relationship; and (3) level of communication between roommates was related to quality of the roommate relationship and perceptions of the residence hall as a socially involving, emotionally supportive environment. Thus, Waldo's (1984) research supports the notion that communication skills are important in the roommate relationship, a relationship that influences overall perceptions of the residence hall experience.

Communicative competence, as measured by the Communicative Adaptability Scale (Duran, 1983), has been shown to be linked to roommate satisfaction in a study by Duran and Zakahi (1988). Results provided evidence of a causal relationship between communication competence and roommate satisfaction, accounting for shared variance of about 30 percent. Three significant predictors of roommate satisfaction from the CAS were social experience, social composure, and articulation. Social confirmation and appropriate disclosure were significantly associated with roommate satisfaction, but were not found to be causally related.

Thus, perceptions of similarity and compatibility, and communication competence appear to be associated with satisfactory roommate relationships. Furthermore, the quality of the roommate relationship may color a student's perception of the residence hall experience, and therefore, is an important factor in student persistence. However, previous research has focused almost exclusively on attitude and personality qualities of the individuals in the roommate dyad and how those characteristics relate to roommate satisfaction. Little research has considered qualities of the roommate relationship itself and how those qualities influence the level of satisfaction.

One such quality is roommate rapport (Carey, Hamilton, & Shanklin, 1986).

Unfortunately, Carey et al. (1986) do not provide a clear conceptualization of rapport, but from their measure it appears that rapport involves a sense of trust, warmth, security and understanding, all of which are developed through frequent open and sincere communication. This suggests that the communicative competence of individuals in a roommate relationship may be very important in the development of rapport. Duran and Zakahi (1988) found competence to be causally related to roommate satisfaction; perhaps this is because communicatively competent roommates are able to develop rapport. A roommate relationship with a high level of interpersonal rapport should be satisfying and hence, may be a factor in decisions to persist in college.

Another variable that is intuitively related to persistence is loneliness in that an inability to adapt successfully to the campus environment can lead to a failure to "fit in". Loneliness may be the result, and may be one factor that prompts a student to leave the college. Loneliness is generally defined as a subjective experience in which individuals feel that the quantity and/or quality of their relationships is lacking (Peplau & Perlman, 1979).

Some evidence for the relationship of loneliness to persistence is provided by Kemerer, et al. (1982) who cite research results which indicate that students who are socially integrated into a campus are much more likely to receive a degree than those who are socially isolated. Socially integrated students are more likely to live in a dormitory, have a part-time job on campus, participate in clubs and social organizations, and declare an academic major earlier in their college careers. Persisters have a high degree of social integration (Kemerer et al., 1982) and probably experience low levels of loneliness. Stresses relating to social integration are perhaps the strongest during the freshman year, at the very beginning of the entering freshman's efforts at acclimatization to campus life. Viewing the attrition phenomenon as

basically a freshman problem, Kemerer, et al., (1982) note that freshmen exhibit the highest drop-out rates. Sixty percent of attrition occurs among freshman students. Clearly then, researchers would do well to examine factors affecting the freshman population to find a key to the attrition problem. Factors should be explored which are connected to acclimatization with campus life, and loneliness is one such variable.

Spitzberg and Cupach (1988) argue that loneliness is negatively related to communication competence. Logically, a student who is less communicatively competent is more likely to demonstrate a deficit in skills and more likely to experience loneliness. This relationship has been the topic of several studies.

Surveying some of that research, Duran (1989) reported a pattern of communication skills deficiencies among lonely individuals. Lonely individuals tend to self-disclose less, experience more social anxiety (Zakahi & Duran, 1985), have fewer social experiences (Zakahi & Duran, 1982, 1985), and view themselves and others as less communicatively competent. Certainly it is reasonable to presume that a college freshman having difficulty in adapting to the college environment may experience loneliness and apply the resultant negative impressions to the campus in general, and eventually drop out of school.

Zakahi and Duran (1982, 1985) explored relationships among communicative competence, communication apprehension, and loneliness. Results indicated that lonely individuals experienced more dyadic communication apprehension (Zakahi & Duran, 1985), reported fewer social experiences (Zakahi & Duran, 1982, 1985), and were less socially confirming (Zakahi & Duran, 1982) than non-lonely individuals.

A study by Franzoi and Davis (1985) found that lonely individuals reported

less self-disclosure to peers than non-lonely persons. Antecedents of self-disclosure defined by Franzoi and Davis are private self-consciousness (the dispositional tendency to focus attention on the more private and covert aspects of oneself, such as internal emotional states, motives, and reflections on experiences), and perspective taking (the tendency of an individual to entertain the psychological viewpoint of another person, thus anticipating needs, feelings, and behaviors). Perspective taking is similar to Duran's (1983) dimension of social confirmation. Franzoi and Davis' (1985) model suggests that lonely and non-lonely people differ in regard to these two antecedents of self-disclosure.

Some studies have shown that lonely individuals are more self-critical, evaluating their own conversational competence more harshly than would others (Hansson & Jones, 1981; Hansson, Jones, & Carpenter, 1984; Jones, Hobbs, & Hockenbury, 1982; Spitzberg & Hurt, 1987). Hansson and Jones (1981) studied 181 undergraduate students, testing the hypothesis that lonely persons' assumed pessimistic feelings and expectations for self and others, would interfere with usually adaptive social processes. Results showed that lonely individuals were less confident in their opinions and less willing to share their opinions with others. Thus, their inability to participate heightens their sense of isolation.

Hansson, et al., (1984) report results of research which indicates that shy or lonely people are more likely to be inaccurately low in their evaluations of their peer relationship with others. Surprisingly, lonely college students reported having less social contact and fewer friends, when on the average they interacted with others at least as often as non-lonely college students.

Jones et al. (1982) examined skills deficits of lonely individuals in a

college-age population. These researchers found that high-lonely individuals gave less attention to their dyadic partners. Also, tests manipulating degree of partner attention produced a significant decrease in self-reported loneliness as partner attention increased. Furthermore, social skill deficits were shown to reduce the probability of friendship formation.

While other factors undoubtedly play a causal role in predicting loneliness, past research suggests that social skills deficits relate significantly to loneliness. Spitzberg and Hurt's (1987) study examined the relationship between the acquisition of communication skills and loneliness. Measuring loneliness at three times during a semester, they applied the Conversational Skills Rating Scale (CSRS) to measure situationally-based competence and the Communicative Adaptability Scale (CAS) to measure dispositional competence. Results confirmed that lonely individuals perceived themselves as being less communicatively competent and they were also perceived by dyadic partners as being less communicatively competent. Social experience was the factor most highly related to loneliness in the study. Spitzberg and Hurt concluded that loneliness may exist where there is a lack of communication skills.

The preceding review suggests that loneliness is negatively related to communication competence and may be a factor in college attrition. Lonely individuals appear to lack social experience and to be anxious about dyadic communication; hence, they may have inadequate social skills. As noted earlier, communicative competence also appears to be related to roommate satisfaction. Consequently, competence is a central focus of this investigation of interpersonal variables associated with student persistence. Specifically, we have adopted Duran's (1983) conceptualization of competence. Noting that "communicative competence is a function of one's ability to adapt

to differing social constraints," Duran (1983) defines communicative adaptability as "the ability to perceive socio-interpersonal relationships and adapt one's interaction goals and behaviors accordingly" (p. 320). According to Duran (1983) communicative competence is comprised of six dimensions: social confirmation, social experience, social composure, appropriate disclosure, articulation, and wit.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research reviewed above suggests that communicative competence is related to roommate satisfaction and that the quality of communication between roommates influences perceptions of the quality of the roommate relationship. How competent a communicator one is should affect the degree to which rapport can be established with one's roommate. In addition, the degree of communicative competence one perceives in the roommate may also influence the level of rapport. If students perceive their roommates as incompetent, they may not be inclined to initiate interaction or to self-disclose. Therefore, the following research questions are posed:

RQ_1: Is there a significant relationship between self-reported communicative competence and roommate rapport?

RQ_2: Is there a significant relationship between reports of roommate's communicative competence and roommate rapport?

Previous research reports that lonely individuals may be less communicatively competent and perceive themselves as less competent. Further research is needed to determine on what specific dimensions of competence lonely people score lower. The only dimension that has been consistently identified is social experience (Zakahi & Duran, 1982, 1985), but results are mixed for the social confirmation dimension. Moreover, research has not examined the relationship between reports of roommate's competence and

self-reported loneliness. Again, if students view their roommates as incompetent communicators, they may be unwilling to interact with them and fail to develop a close relationship. This may lead to a sense of loneliness, particularly among freshmen students who may not have a large social network. Thus, the following hypotheses will be tested:

H_1: There is a signficant negative relationship between self-reported communicative competence and loneliness.

H_2: There is a significant negative relationship between reports of roommate's communicative competence and loneliness.

Previous research has investigated relationships between social integration and satisfaction with the university. Kemerer, et al. (1982) found that socially integrated students were more likely to be satisfied and remain in school than socially isolated students. Furthermore, roommates who perceived their relationship to be of high quality found the overall residence hall experience to be supportive (Waldo, 1984). Lonely students may not be socially integrated into campus life and may achieve less rapport with their roommates, thus leading to dissatisfaction with the residence hall experience. The question of whether this translates into dissatisfaction with the university has not been studied. To address this, the following questions are posed:

RQ_3: Is there a significant negative relationship between self-reported loneliness and roommate rapport?

RQ_4: Is there a significant negative relationship between self-reported loneliness and satisfaction with the university?

Finally, the relationship of these interpersonal variables (communicative competence of self and roommate, loneliness, and roommate rapport) to persistence in college has not be addressed by previous research. A central concern of this study is the influence of such factors on retention of students. Therefore, the following research question is posed:

RQ5: Are there significant differences between persisters and non-persisters on measures of communicative competence, roommate rapport, and loneliness after three semesters?

METHOD

Participants

Participants in this study were freshman students enrolled in several sections of a freshman-level orientation seminar at a small, private university in the northeast. The orientation seminar was required of every freshman enrolled in the School of Arts and Sciences. The goals of the seminar were to introduce students to the campus and provide academic advising. Out of a total of 350 students, 200 participated in this study, representing a 57 percent participation rate. The sample was determined to be representative of the population of freshmen enrolled in the School of Arts and Sciences, with regard to the demographic characteristics of the total pool of entering freshmen.

Of the sample of participants, 116 (58 percent) were female and 84 (42 percent) were male. Ages ranged from 17 to 24, with 70.5 percent (141) reporting an age of 18; 18 percent (36) indicating an age of 17; and 9 percent (18) reporting an age of 19. The remaining 15 students were distributed throughout the 20-24 age range. In terms of ethnic background 91.5 percent (181) were white, 5 percent (10) were black, 2 were oriental, 4 were hispanic, and one did not respond.

At the end of three semesters, 30 percent of the student participants were no longer enrolled, according to university records. Approximately 140 students of the initial pool of 200 participants were still registered.

Measures

Communicative competence was operationalized by the Communicative Adaptability Scale (CAS) (Duran, 1983). The CAS self-report consisted of 30, five-point Likert statements ranging from "always true of me" to "never true of

me". The six CAS dimensions, assessed by five items each, were social composure, social confirmation, social experience, appropriate disclosure, articulation, and wit. Reliabilities for the dimensions were: .88, .89, .86, .85, .88, and .82, respectively.

The six CAS dimensions, converted to an other-report format to measure participants' perceptions of their roommates' communicative competence, were tested for reliability. Reliability coefficients for the same six dimensions in an other-report format were as follows: other-social composure, .91; other-social confirmation, .93; other-social experience, .91; other-appropriate disclosure, .87; other-articulation, .90; and other-wit, .80.

Roommate rapport was operationalized by the Roommate Rapport Scale (Carey, Hamilton, & Shanklin, 1986). The unidimensional roommate rapport scale of 28 items yielded a reliability coefficient of .98.

Loneliness was measured by the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Ferguson, 1980), consisting of 20 Likert statements. Alpha reliability for the loneliness scale was .94 (Cronbach, 1951).

University satisfaction was operationalized by a fifteen-item self-report scale which asked participants to rate their satisfaction with elements comprising university life including courses, majors, clubs, sports, faculty, location of campus, facilities, dormitories, roommates and meals. Items were presented in a Likert-type format, with five-point response options. Factor analysis of the fifteen items measuring university satisfaction yielded a unidimensional structure, with an alpha reliability of .81.

Persistence was operationalized by surveying university enrollment records three semesters after the measures were administered. Participants' names were checked against the university registrar's enrollment records, and the participants were divided into two groups: those who were still enrolled

and those who were not.

Procedures

Participants completed packets distributed by their instructors who asked them to complete their responses during class time. The packets were collected by the instructors and returned to the researcher.

Statistical Analyses

To determine significant relationships among variables, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients were computed for the self-report version of the CAS, the Roommate Rapport Scale, the UCLA Loneliness Scale, and the University Satisfaction measure (See Table 1), and reports of roommates' competence with all other variables (See Table 2).

The 15-item University Satisfaction Scale was subjected to principal components factor analysis with oblique rotation. Results indicated that the measure was unidimensional, with the single factor solution accounting for 24.6 percent of the variance.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to test research questions 1 and 2 and hupotheses 1 and 2. To test research questions 3 and 4, which asked if there is a relationship between roommate rapport and loneliness and between loneliness and university satsifaction, Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficients were obtained.

To address RQ_5, t-tests were computed to determine if persisters differed from withdrawers on communication competence, university satisfaction, roommate rapport, and loneliness. For all statistical analyses, the .05 level of significance was used.

RESULTS

In answer to RQ_1, multiple regression analysis indicated that two of the six self-reported CAS dimensions made significant contributions to the

model. The multiple R for the model was .29 ($F = 7.55$; d.f. = 2, 166; $p < .001$). The model accounted for eight percent of the variance. The two CAS dimensions were social composure and appropriate disclosure, both significant predictors of roommate rapport, accounting for five percent and three percent unique variance, respectively.

Addressing RQ_2, which concerned the relationship between perceptions of roommate's communicative competence and roommate rapport, three CAS dimensions were significant predictors of roommate rapport: other-social confirmation, other-social experience, and other-appropriate disclosure. The multiple R for the model was .85 ($F = 140.78$; d.f. = 3, 163; $p < .001$). The model accounted for 72% of the total variance. Other-social confirmation accounted for 69% unique variance in roommate rapport, with other-social experience and other-appropriate disclosure accounting for two percent and one percent, respectively.

Hypothesis 1, which predicted a negative relationship between self-reported communicative competence and loneliness, was partially confirmed. The multiple R for the model was -.67 ($F = 48.91$; d.f. = 3, 182; $p < .001$), accounting for 45% of the total variance. Three of the self-reported CAS dimensions, social composure, appropriate disclosure, and social experience, were significant negative predictors of loneliness. Social composure accounted for 34% unique variance, and appropriate disclosure and social experience accounted for seven percent and three percent unique variance, respectively.

Hypothesis 2 was also partially supported. Two of the other-report CAS dimensions, other-social confirmation and other-articulation, were significant negative predictors of loneliness. The multiple R for the model was -.36 ($F = 11.88$; d.f. = 2, 163; $p < .00$), accounting for 13% of the variance.

Other-social confirmation accounted for nine percent unique variance and other-articulation accounted for three percent unique variance in loneliness.

In response to RQ_3, a significant negative relationship was obtained between loneliness and roommate rapport. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was $-.34$ ($p < .001$), accounting for 12% shared variance.

Addressing RQ_4, results indicated a significant negative relationship between self-reported loneliness and satisfaction with the university. The correlation coefficient was $-.27$ ($p < .001$), accounting for seven percent shared variance.

Finally, t-tests were computed to examine research question 5, which focused on differences between persisters and withdrawers. Those who persisted significantly differed from those who did not on one dimension of communicative competence, social confirmation ($t = 2.80$; d.f. = 1, 196; $p < .01$). Students who persisted reported being more socially confirming in their communication ($\bar{X} = 20.96$) than those who withdrew ($\bar{X} = 19.53$).

A significant difference was observed between persisters and withdrawers on loneliness scores ($t = 2.06$; d.f. = 1, 193; $p < .05$). Those who did not persist reported a higher mean loneliness score ($\bar{X} = 46.81$) than those who persisted ($\bar{X} = 42.25$).

DISCUSSION

Colleges and universities are faced with a declining pool of potential college freshmen. It has been noted in admissions literature that it is far easier and more economical to retain a student than to recruit a new student. As a result, more and more attention is being paid to factors which contribute to college persistence. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of interpersonal variables, such as communicative competence, loneliness, and roommate rapport, upon decisions to persist in college.

First, this study looked at the relationship between self-reports of communicative competence and roommate rapport, with the expectation that more competent individuals would be able to achieve higher levels of rapport with their roommates. Results demonstrated that among the self-reported communicative competence dimensions, two of the six dimensions, social composure and appropriate disclosure, were significantly related to roommate rapport accounting for 5% and 3% unique variance, respectively. Those who are socially composed may find it easier to establish rapport simply because of their greater tendency to initiate interaction than those who are nervous communicators. Without sufficient quantity of communication, it is difficult to establish roommate rapport. Further, individuals who demonstrate appropriate disclosure are able to establish greater rapport because they are neither too open nor too withdrawn in their communication with their roommates. To be too disclosive is likely to cause one's roommate to feel uncomfortable which prohibits the exchange of personal information needed to develop a close relationship.

The results of the present study support results of an earlier study utilizing the Communicative Adaptability Scale and Hecht's (1978) Communication Satisfaction Scale. Demonstrating a high shared variance between the two sets of dimensions, Duran and Zakahi (1988) identified three significant predictors of roommate satisfaction as social experience, social composure, and articulation. The present study confirms the role of self-reported dimensions of social composure in roommate satisfaction although it identifies a stronger role for appropriate disclosure. An explanation for the significance of appropriate disclosure within the model may lie in the acquaintance stage when new roommates are seeking confirming behavior from each other due to the anxiety associated with the novelty of the freshman experience. Sharing of

experiences and personal information is important at this stage and perhaps is less so later.

This research also examined perceptions of roommates' communicative competence and the development of rapport. Appropriate disclosure again significantly contributed to roommate rapport. There is a tendency to expect reciprocity of self-disclosure, and therefore, individuals who perceive their roommates as disclosing appropriately may find it easier to establish a satisfactory, reciprocal exchange.

Additionally, perceived social experience and social confirmation combined with appropriate disclosure to account for 72% of the variance in roommate rapport. Social confirmation perceived in one's roommate is by far the most significant predicter of roommate rapport in the model, accounting for 69% of the total variance. In effect, roommates' social confirmation served to affirm one's own self-presentation, which is likely to enhance one's motivation to establish rapport.

The relationship between reports of roommates' social confirmation and roommate rapport may also be explained by what Duran and Zakahi (1988) refer to as a "feedback loop" (p. 11). The term suggests that roommate A seeks indications of liking on the part of roommate B before offering such indications. Once confirming indications are perceived, roommate A will respond with like confirmation in a feedback system. Prior to initiating the "feedback loop" effect, new roommates seem to adopt a "you first" attitude.

The perception that one's roommate has a high level of social experience also was related to a greater degree of rapport. There are two possible explanations for this finding. First, the roommate who mixes easily with others and who appears to enjoy interaction may initiate much of the early interaction needed to develop rapport. Second, if one's roommate appears to

enjoy social experiences, this may prompt the individual to engage the roommate in exchanges that precipitate the development of rapport.

Thus, perceived social confirmation, or approving behavior, coupled with perceived social experience and appropriate disclosure contribute to a positive communicative atmosphere. Further, it is interesting to note that perceptions of competence in one's roommate were twice as likely to predict successful roommate rapport than self-rated competence.

The significance of this "other orientation," is supported by previous research. Duran and Zakahi (1983) cite research supporting the notion that satisfaction is more dependent upon self-perceptions of the other person's competence than on perceptions of self-competence. Attribution theory may hold a key to this other-orientation. Duran and Zakahi (1988) cite research which suggests what when interacting with others, one's own behavior is attributed to the constraints or circumstances of the situation (adaptability), but that other's behaviors are attributed to their own perceived communicative skills. Thus attribution theory explains the strong relationship between reports of roommates' competence and roommate rapport, particularly within the first few weeks of a developing roommate relationship. "Individuals attribute most of the responsibility for a successful encounter to the other interactant...[feeling] little responsibility for the outcome of the encounter" (Duran & Zakahi, 1988, p. 20).

Second, this study examined the relationship between self-reported communicative competence and loneliness as well as between reports of roommates' communicative competence and loneliness. Results indicated that a negative relationship exists between self-reported social composure, social experience, and appropriate disclosure accounting for 45% of the variance in loneliness.

These results are consistent with findings of previous research which suggests lonely individuals are more likely to be less competent than nonlonely individuals. Specifically, this study is consistent with Zakahi and Duran's (1982, 1985) and Spitzberg and Hurt's (1987) work which found that lonely persons reported being less socially composed, less socially experienced, and unable to engage in appropriate levels of disclosure. The relationships among these variables is fairly intuitive. Persons may experience loneliness because they are nervous about interacting with others. Because of their social anxiety, they do not enjoy nor do they engage in many, varied social situations. As a result they are unskilled at self-disclosure and find it difficult to establish sufficiently satisfying relationships necessary for eliminating the sensation of loneliness.

Perceptions of roommate's communicative competence accounted for 13% of the variance in loneliness. Two dimensions of competence, social confirmation and articulation, accounting for nine percent and three percent of the variance respectively, were significantly negatively related to loneliness.

First-semester freshmen are likely to view the roommate relationship as very important, particularly until they are able to develop a social network on campus. If they do not perceive their roommates as socially confirming (not providing approval of their self-presentations) and as unable to express thoughts and feelings clearly, they may feel distant and unable to communicate with those roommates. Since initially and for some time into the semester they may not have other close relationships, they may experience loneliness due to the inability to establish a satisfying relationship with their roommates. Future research might look at perceptions of both members of the roommate dyad to determine the effects of those perceptions on the development of the relationship and the experience of loneliness.

Of interest is that individuals appear to take communicative responsibility for their levels of loneliness. This was not the case with roommate rapport, in which roommate's competence was a larger predictor of rapport than was self-reported competence. The inverse was observed with regard to loneliness. Self-reported competence was a larger predictor of loneliness than was roommate's competence.

Third, the present study investigated the relationships of loneliness to roommate rapport and to university satisfaction, producing correlations of -.34 and -.27, respectively. Again, the roommate relationship probably serves as an important antidote to loneliness, particularly during the first semester on campus. A relationship not achieving a high level of rapport is unable to fulfill that function. This may help create a general dissatisfaction with the new environment. The depth of this dissatisfaction is ultimately reflected in students' decisions to leave the university or college.

The final, and most important, issue addressed by this research is the influence of communicative competence, roommate rapport, and loneliness upon decisions to persist or withdraw from an academic institution. With regard to communicative competence, those students who withdrew differed on social confirmation from those who persisted, such that those persisting were more socially confirming than those who left. In the early stages of a student's experience on campus, confirming behavior, both offered and reciprocated, undoubtedly enhances relationship development, which eliminates or prevents loneliness, leading to a feeling of satisfaction with that university and a tendency to remain enrolled. Self-reported appropriate disclosure, knowing when and how much to disclose, approached significance. This probably produces the same effects as social confirmation, enhancing relationship development, reducing loneliness, causing general satisfaction, and leading to persistence.

Finally, it is not surprising to find that individuals who decided to leave the institution reported significantly higher levels of loneliness than those students who persisted. Taken together, it would appear that a student's communicative ability influences his or her relationship with the roommate and general satisfaction with the university, ultimately influencing the choice to persist or withdraw from the academic institution. Obviously, this is a rather simplistic and linear description of the relationship among these variables. Future research should employ causal models to test these relationships. However, these results indicate that interpersonal variables ultimately influence attrition.

An implication of this research is that incoming freshmen might benefit from training devoted to enhancing communicative competence and rapport-building skills. Such training might increase the chances of developing successful roommate relationships and decreasing or preventing loneliness, both of which might lead to general satisfaction with the campus. Logically, this could potentially provide the direct benefit of enhancing chances of student persistence at the university. The importance of student retention within the university community is underscored by predictions of declining student populations.

REFERENCES

Berg, J.H. (1984). Development of friendship between roommates. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46, 346-356.

Carey, J.D., Hamilton, D.L., & Shanklin, G. (1986). Development of an instrument to measure rapport between college roommates. Journal of College Student Personnel, 27, 269-273.

Cronbach, L.J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. Psychometricks, 16, 297-334.

Duran, R.L. (1983). Communicative adaptability: A measure of social communicative competence. Communication Quarterly, 31, 320-326.

Duran. R.L. (1989). Social communicative competence in adulthood. In J. Nussbaum (Ed.), Life-span communication: Normative processes (pp. 195-224). Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Duran. R.L. & Zakahi, W.R. (1988). The influence of communication competence upon roommate satisfaction. Western Journal of Speech Communication, 52, 135-146.

Franzoi, S.L. & Davis, M.H. (1985). Adolescent self-disclosure and loneliness: Private self-consciousness and parental influences. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 48, 768-780.

Hansson, R.O. & Jones, W.H. (1981). Loneliness, cooperation, and conformity among American undergraduates. Journal of Social Psychology, 115, 103-108.

Hansson, R.O., and Jones, W.H., & Carpenter, F.N. (1984). Relational competence and social support. In P. Shaver (Ed.), Review of personality and social psychology, emotions, relationships and health (pp. 265-284). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Hecht, M.L. (1978). The conceptualization and measurement of interpersonal communication satisfaction. Human Communication Research, 4, 253-264.

Jones, L.M., McCaa, B.B., & Martecchini, C.A. (1980). Roommate satisfaction as a function of similarity. Journal of College Student Personnel, 21, 229-234.

Jones, W.H., Hobbs, S.A., and Hockenbury, D. (1982). Loneliness and social skill deficits. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 42, 682-689.

Kemerer, F.R., Baldridge, J.V., & Green, K.S. (1982). Strategies for effective enrollment management. American Association of State Colleges and Universities (Washington, DC).

Lenning, O.T., Sauer, K., & Beal, P.E. (1980). Student retention strategies. AAHE/ERIC/Higher Education Research Report, No. 8.

McConnell, W.R. & Kaufman, J. (1984). High school graduates: Projections for the fifty states (1982-2000). Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (Boulder, CO).

Nudd, T.R. (1965). Satisfied and dissatisfied college roommates. Journal of College Student Personnel, 50, 161-164.

Peplau, L.A., & Perlman, D. (1979). Blueprint for a social psychological theory of loneliness. In M. Cool & G. Wilson (Eds.), Love and attraction (pp. 99-108). Oxford, England: Pergman.

Russell, D., Peplau, L.A. & Ferguson, M.L. (1980). Developing a measure of loneliness. Journal of Personality Assessment, 42, 290-294.

Spitzberg, B.H. & Cupach, W.R. (1988). Handbook of interpersonal competence research. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Spitzberg, B.H. & Hurt, H.T. (1987). The measurement of interpersonal skills in instructional contexts. Communication Education, 36, 28-45.

Upcraft, M.L. (1985). Residence halls and student activities. In L. Noel, R. Levitz, & D. Saluri (Eds.). Increasing student retention: Effective programs and practices for reducing the drop-out rate. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Waldo, M. (1984). Roommate communication as related to students' personal and social adjustment. Journal of College Student Personnel, 25, 39-44.

Zakahi, W.R. & Duran, R.L. (1982). All the lonely people: The relationship among loneliness, communicative competence, and communication anxiety. Communication Quarterly, 30, 203-209.

Zakahi, W.R. & Duran, R.L. (1985). Loneliness, communicative competence, and communication apprehension: Extension and replication. Communication Quarterly, 33, 50-60.

TABLE 1

Pearson Correlation Matrix for Communicative Adaptability Scale (Self-report), Roommate Rapport, University Satisfaction, and Loneliness

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. SCM	-								
2. SCN	.23*	-							
3. SE	.64**	.47**	-						
4. AD	.13	.36**	.23*	-					
5. A	.31**	.15	.15	.20*	-				
6. W	.12	.14	.16	.16	.05	-			
7. RAP	.22*	.17	.18*	.20*	-.01	.09	-		
8. SAT	.12	.26**	.24*	.19*	.02	-.06	.33**	-	
9. LN	-.57**	-.34**	-.55**	-.35**	-.22*	-.18*	-.34**	-.27**	-

KEY: SCM=Social Composure; SCN=Social Confirmation; SE=Social Experience; AD=Appropriate Disclosure; A=Articulation; W=Wit; RAP=Roommate Rapport; SAT=University Satisfaction; LN=Loneliness.

*=$p < .01$
**=$p < .001$.

TABLE 2

Pearson Correlation Matrix for Communicative Adaptability Scale (Reports of Roommates' Behavior), Roommate Rapport, University Satisfaction, and Loneliness

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. SCM	-								
2. SCN	.49**	-							
3. SE	.72**	.61**	-						
4. AD	.43**	.68**	.48**	-					
5. A	.29**	.29**	.32**	.27**	-				
6. W	.13	.25*	.25**	.25**	-.04	-			
7. RAP	.48**	.83**	.62**	.66**	.30**	.25**	-		
8. SAT	.20*	.25*	.18*	.31**	.25**	-.05	.33**	-	
9. LN	-.14	-.30**	-.18*	-.19*	-.23*	-.09	-.34**	-.27**	-

KEY: SCM=Social Composure; SCN-Social Confirmation; SE=Social Experience; AD=Appropriate Disclosure; A=Articulation; W=Wit; RAP=Roommate Rapport; SAT=University Satisfaction; LN=Loneliness.

* = $p < .01$
** = $p < .001$